**The Set**

The show starts with the word, Alice, in capital letters, suspended from the ceiling in the centre of the stage. The word is lit with white light and has sparling lights within the letters. On either side of the word are large curly brackets made from wood and decorated with items which feature in the Alice story, such as a toadstool, a butterfly, a key, a top-hat, symbols from playing cards, clubs, hearts, spades and diamonds, a bottle a cup and an egg timer. On each side there is one slanting, narrow, green cats-eye. Every so often, while we wait for the show to start one eye or the other winks. Outside the empty centre stage are steps made from blocks. There are three on the left and two on the right. The Cheshire cat who is the narrator of the tale frequently perches on one or other of these blocks.

The first place we enter in Act 1 is the school classroom. There’s a large blackboard, centre stage, with shelves and books under it and children’s art work pinned around its frame. There’s a set of 4 old fashioned bare tables and chairs placed in front of the blackboard on either side of it. After the arrival of the white rabbit a rabbit hole appears, suspended in the air. It’s like a swirl of light with a hole in the centre.

Then there’s the stack of doors. There are 5 large doors on the ground and above them hang 4 others and above that 3 others, then above again 2 doors and finally 1.

The next scene in Act 1 is the wood with strips of green and brown fabric hanging from above and at centre back a cut-out 2 dimensional brown bush with a large flip chart hanging on it. Later in this scene an enormous toadstool appears. It’s pink with large white spots and it looks very poisonous. For the Mad Hatters Tea Party a notice declares that there’s “A Secret Tea Party rally here today’. A number of blocks are assembled to produce a table of different heights. It’s covered in layers of tablecloths, and decorative pennants In pastel colours. Round the table are blocks and coloured chairs for the guests to sit on and the table is laid with tea pots, cups and saucers and cake plates .

Act 2 takes us first to the garden of the Queen of Hearts. Here several of the hanging strips have acquired heart shaped foliage with red flowers, turning them into rose bushes. The one on the right, at the front, has some red flowers but also some white ones.

Then we’re in the prison where the lights make the cell look as though its walls, windows and doors are covered with bars. Here there is just a rough bare bench. In the court room there are two high wooden thrones, one far higher than the other. There is also a wooden lectern in a matching wood pattern. Before the court scene begins huge playing card symbols, Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs and Spades descend from the ceiling to hang over the court. Finally we return to the school room where the story began.

**The Cast.**

The Cheshire Cat begins the play. She is tall and slender and wears a spectacular costume of orange fur with patterned orange tights. He features are almost completely hidden by a tangled mass of orange fur around her head. She has a ruff of fur at the wrist and ankles of tight fitting sleeves and tights. Her bottom is decorated with a bustle of fur and she has a beautiful, long, swishy tail with a fringe of orange fur at its tip. Her shoulders are also padded with fur. She slinks around the stage looking very trendy. The part of the Cheshire Cat is played by Charlotte McCurry.

Alice is slender and small with long blonde hair, tied with black ribbons, and blue eyes. She wears a blue patterned full dress, cinched in at the waist with lots of stiff net petticoats adding to the fullness of the skirt and showing beneath it. Her legs are covered with blue and white striped tights and she has white ankle boots with high heels on her feet. A small white apron covers the skirt of her dress and is fastened with a black ribbon. The part of Alice is played by Ruby Campbell.

The parts of the School Ma’am and the Queen of Hearts are both taken by Alison Harding. She is tall and well-built with a commanding air. As the teacher she wears a long maroon skirt with a white high necked blouse and over it a black academic gown. Her long grey hair is fastened back in a bun and a pair of old-fashioned spectacles perch on her nose. When she first appears as the Queen of Hearts at the end of Act 1 she dominates the centre of the stage, wearing an enormous cardboard crinoline skirt over 12 feet high. Her small body and head can scarcely be seen at the top of the gigantic skirt. The skirt is panelled in contrasting strips of plain red alternating with white, decorated with black diamonds. Her hair is an enormous haystack of a white bouffant with a sharp, pointed crown perched on top of it. When she descends from on high in Act 2 the skirt is a normal full length with red strips alternating with black and white. This time she is wearing the skirt which moves with her, rather than being something she stands behind. It is still very stiff and is probably wired underneath to make it stick out. The black ruff round her neck can now be seen and her white sleeves are visible. Her enormous hair remains as before as does the crown perched on top of it.

Christina Nelson plays two parts; the White Rabbit and Playing Card Number 3. She is a round dumpy figure with a broad smile which can hardly be seen behind the rabbit costume. She wears large furry white rabbit ears lined in pink, and pink gasses cover her eyes. She has a frock coat with tails, trimmed with white fur and decorated all over with printed pocket watches. She also wears blue pantaloons and white tights and a white waistcoat from which dangles an enormous pocket watch while a key hangs round her neck. She scampers about on enormous, furry, rabbit feet. As the playing card she wears a white tabard in 3 layers with sparkling epaulettes on the shoulders, white tights, black knee length boots, long white gauntlets and a silver helmet. A large Club sign is printed in black on each of her 3 layers, making her Number 3.

The parts of Tweedledum, the Dormouse and the King are all played by Rea Campbell Hill. Tweedledum and Tweedledee are startling with their straight orange hair under black bowler hats with a red rose trimming each hat. They wear identical tartan trousers in orange and brown, loud checks, held up by green braces with black and white striped T shirts, white collars, floppy white bows round their necks, patterned black and white jackets, green and orange socks, one of each colour, and white sneakers. As the dormouse Rea wears round furry ears with brown pantaloons a short brown jacket and a long thin tail. His brown jacket sports a political rosette. As the king he’s dressed in black and gold pantaloons, white tights printed with tiny red hearts, black pumps with a large red rose on each toe a red jacket with a floppy white bow tied around his neck. He wears a black pageboy bob wig and it is surmounted by a sparkling coronet.

Adam Dougal plays Tweedledee, Playing Card Ace, the March Hare and the White Knight. He is a fairly tall, slender figure and as Tweedledee wears exactly the same as Tweedledum, the tartan trousers in orange and brown, striped Tshirts with floppy bows at the neck and patterned black and white jackets. As playing Card Ace he is in the same white layered tabard as Playing Card 3, complete with helmet, gauntlets and boots. Instead of 3 clubs printed on his tabard he has only one because he is the Ace. The March Hare wears a furry brown cap on his head, complete with enormous floppy hare’s ears. His long brown jacket is covered in medals and rosettes and beneath it he wears a pair of striped Capri pants in soft brown and beige stripes. As the White Knight he sports a long dirty white tabard trimmed with silver and covered by a grubby white cloak over off-white tights. He wears silver gauntlets and brown boots and has wispy silver whiskers and hair. On top of his messy hair he wears a helmet which looks very like an upside down colander for draining vegetables. A red cockade is attached to this helmet.

The final member of the cast is Mark Dugdale. He plays the Caterpillar, the Mad Hatter, and Playing Card 2. He is exceptionally tall and looks spectacular in all of his costumes. As the caterpillar he stands in front of a line of four other cast members. He has a jazzy tight shiny onesy made from Lycra in green, which shows off his very long legs. The wrists and ankles are decorated with fluffy orange ruffs complete with glittery sparkles. On his head he wears a green cap and above it a stiff head-dress in pink. Under the head-dress he sports a green wig. Behind him in the line the four other cast members complete the caterpillar, wearing smocks in green and orange with frills at the cuffs and ankles. Each carries a pole, covered in green Lycra and uses the pole as a leg. As the Mad Hatter Mark wears a beige suit, trousers and jackets spattered all over with different colours. He has a political rosette on his jacket He also wears his trade-mark top hat with tickets and a feather tucked into the brim. His hair is grey.

The show is written and directed by Paul Boyd and this is the 20th anniversary of its first production.

These notes are brought to you by NI Sightlines in conjunction with the Lyric Theatre and will be read out ten minutes before the show starts. If you listen then, it’s a good opportunity to check if your headset is working.